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INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL FOOD CONTROL

BY ALONZO E. TAYLOR, M.D.,

Member of the War Trade Board, and of the Food Administration.

The subject of food control is so large and it lends itself with such difficulty to systematic treatment, that I believe it will be a less unprofitable contribution upon my part if I confine myself to three or four points that mean much from the interpretive point of view. We use the word "priority" a great deal, and we mean by it that some one has a superior right to the possession of a particular commodity. Now, in the final analysis, the food problem resolves itself into a problem of priorities, because we do not all possess the same right to food stuffs in the qualitative or quantitative sense.

In international relations, we have four groups of priorities: our Allies, the neutrals of Europe, the neutrals of the Western Hemisphere, and ourselves. The priority claims of our Allies, of course based upon statistical data, are largely the expression of the fact that they have upon their lands the actual fields of battle. The priority claims of the neutral nations in Europe rest upon a peculiar basis, are frequently misunderstood, but are of great importance from the viewpoint both of political and social relations and from the standpoint of the carrying on of the war. We have made definite commitments of food stuffs to Switzerland, Holland and Norway. These commitments are an expression of the realization upon the part of the Allies that the neutrals in Europe occupy a position which compels recognition, entirely apart from humanitarian considerations. Their commerce was free; they secured their subsistence from the four quarters of the globe. They are hemmed in now by a submarine warfare, and their commercial relations are restricted because they are unable, in a competitive sense, to secure in the markets of the world the attention that formerly they did secure. In other words, both the Allies and the submarine warfare of the enemy operate in the direction of restriction of supplies to the neutral nations of Europe. And in consideration of the situation, the Allies owe it to Switzerland, Holland and Norway, in the same

sense that we owe it to Belgium, which is overrun by Germany, to maintain their subsistence; and it is a priority of high order.

The neutrals of the Western Hemisphere have priority rights upon food stuffs of the world. More than that, they have priority rights upon food stuffs of the United States. Prior to the war we had practically ceased to be a food-exporting nation. We were, in fact, a food-importing nation. The neutral nations of the Western Hemisphere secured their food stuffs elsewhere. They supplied raw materials to us and they purchased finished products from us. Be they manufactured commodities or food stuffs, there is no other place now where the neutral nations can secure finished products except from the United States. For example, they used to import cheese from Germany and Holland; they now must appeal to us for cheese if they are to secure it. The whole world turns to us now for food. From most of the neutral nations of the entire world come appeals for certain articles; from missionaries, miners and lumbermen, from the south coast of Africa, the South Sea Islands, China, and all through South America; from every direction come appeals to us for food stuffs of certain kinds in certain amounts, finished food stuffs as a rule, in return for raw products.

These appeals constitute priorities that must be given full consideration by the Allies, entirely apart from our war program; and in addition, in consideration of the war program directly, because food stuffs constitute a fraction of the finished products that we must export as commodities in order to pay for raw materials. It seems to be extremely difficult to secure from the general American public a recognition of the fundamental fact that we must pay for everything that we buy in terms of international exchange; that we cannot pay in gold or securities but must pay in commodities; and, therefore, that the entire standard of life, plane of living and ideas of consumption of the American people must be guided by the consideration that we must ship from this country finished commodities of every kind in order to pay the neutral nations of the world for the indispensable raw materials which we secure from them, that are vital to the carrying on of the war. It is impossible, for example, to expect to secure nitrates from Chili and manganese from Brazil, and so on and so forth, unless we are willing to send women's hats to Chili and worsteds to Brazil and so on. The field of exchange becomes a broad one, but the principle must be estab-

lished that the necessity of paying for raw materials with commodities rather than with gold or securities constitutes a veritable priority claim upon the part of these nations, and this claim extends to food stuffs to a very considerable extent. Lastly, of course, we have our commitments to our own people.

Now, if one studies the situation of international priorities in the other countries at war, where the same situation holds, because even to this day our Allies are compelled to export finished commodities, we realize that these three sets of external priorities, our Allies, the neutrals of Europe and the neutrals of South America, may assume one of two sets of relations with respect to the domestic program: they may be competitive or they may be unified into a single agency. If they were competitive, we would have the British wheat executive, the Swiss food controller and the Cuban Council of Defence competing in the United States for food stuffs, with, of course, the result of laying a foundation for speculation, of which there would be neither measurement nor control.

The only escape from this is to unify all of these agencies and to direct the stream of exports; once it has left the producer it must pass through one single channel to the various lands to which the commodities are to be exported. In other words, there must be one buyer for export. Now, the moment that we assume the second of these obligations, which is to have one buyer in place of many competitive price bidders, we place in the one agency a buying power that is almost immeasurable as against the domestic buyer. This necessarily, therefore, leads to the determination that the organization that buys for export, must be the identical organization that controls domestic consumption and as far as possible the channels of trade. This is one of the most difficult features of food control, in the international sense—the machinery by which we will supply the food stuffs due to our Allies, to the neutrals in Europe and to the neutrals in the rest of the world from our stocks, without compromising our domestic situation or allowing the buyer of a foreign agency of this type to appear upon the domestic market. Obviously, an analysis of such relationship from the classical standpoint of supply and demand, becomes directly out of question.

Leaving now the international group of priorities, we have domestically also three groups of definite priorities that must be given consideration. And here again we find it in this country, as in

England, France and Germany, a very difficult problem to secure assent to the proposition that there are differential priorities within a nation. We are possessed of equal rights in liberty and in the pursuit of happiness; but this does not mean, in war time, an equal right for the possession of specified food stuffs or comestibles regarded as a unit. The first priority naturally goes to the military forces, and this priority is one not only extreme in amount but very specific in other directions, since the standardization of the requirements of the military forces has been brought to a point of practical perfection. The specifications are very high and the demands are definite, and it is necessary in order to fill these demands that a waste of raw commodities occur, which is not true in the case of articles for civilian utilization. For example, if we wish a million shoes for civilians, it is very different from getting a million shoes for soldiers, since a million soldiers' shoes destroy far more cow hides than a million civilians' shoes, because of the higher requirements. Thus, the priority of military requirements becomes a difficult one because it exercises a disproportionate drain upon our commodities, and the full requirement of the soldier is many times the mean requirement of the civilian.

Secondly, there is a very definite priority in favor of the working classes. This priority has been met abroad in one of several ways—at least, they have attempted to meet it in one of several ways. But they have all finally come to one solution, or one attempted solution, and that is direct subsidy. Nowhere abroad today among the warring nations, in England, France, Germany or Austria-Hungary, do they attempt to secure for their working classes food at the wage of the classes themselves; but there is everywhere,—to a different extent in the different countries and with different commodities—a direct subsidy on the part of the state. Every English workman who purchases bread for 9 cents knows that it costs the state 12 cents; every German workman who purchases potatoes for M. 5.75 knows it costs the state M. 7.50. There is a fixed price for the producer and consumer; in order to secure the subsistence of the working classes at the prevalent wage, they are compelled to make a direct subsidy to the working classes. We are not in that situation, but we have imposed upon us an equally pressing obligation. There are classes who can adapt consumption, and the classes who can yield and who have the leeway, must grant

that leeway to the working classes if we are to avoid the final step to which our Allies have been driven.

There is an excellent illustration in the case of wheat just now. We have not enough wheat left in this country to supply our own usual demands, because it has gone abroad to our Allies. There is not enough wheat left to supply each person in the United States with the normal amount; nor is there enough left to maintain half of the normal flour consumption. Wheat has a fixed price to the producer. Wheat flour is the cheapest food, practically speaking, on the market today. We wish to send wheat to our Allies, the chief reason being that wheat lends itself to the subsistence of our Allies with the least degree of labor; our Allies are overworked to a very much greater extent than we are and to an extent of which Americans have little conception.

Since our Allies are overworked, they ought to receive consideration at our hands in every direction. We want to send them a food supply at the least outlay of woman's work, and that is why wheat is going to them. Now, that being true, we are deliberately cutting our wheat supply down and leaving the rice, corn and oats supply high. Now, the same state of affairs that induces us as a nation to elect to eat oats, rice and corn in this country in order to send wheat abroad is equally imperative upon the well-to-do classes and the rural communities, who have freedom of choice, to elect to eat corn, rice and oats and allow the working classes in the cities to have wheat flour in disproportionate amounts. If it were to be put in figures, for example, I should say something of this sort. We have statistically eight pounds per person per month of wheat flour. Now, until the new crop, every person of means ought to make it possible for a laboring man, whose wage makes it a difficulty for him to meet the cost of subsistence, to have not eight pounds but, let us say, twelve pounds. In other words, each one of us must average off our consumption with the consumption of a worker whose wage will not permit him to elect a higher priced food instead of wheat flour.

For the wheat still unconsumed, the same argument that holds between us and France, holds in this country, as between the well-to-do and the rural communities on the one hand, and the wage-earners of the large cities on the other, because it is the wage-earners of large cities who feel the very narrow margin between

wage and cost of living. This is a priority of great importance for the maintenance of social rest and industrial efficiency. If this priority is not guaranteed and maintained by the voluntary efforts of the American people, we will face the precise situation they have all been driven to abroad, that of direct subsidy, much as this would be against the traditions of the American people. If we should continue to face with our cereals stocks the same situation next year that we are facing now, we would have to judge between our present attempt at solution and the situation into which the British government has been forced, because in the final analysis, the relations are absolutely identical.

A peculiar experience is observed in connection with the relation between priority and price. It has been a common theorem that production could be enlarged by increasing price. This has been proved for agricultural products, regarded as a unit, to be fallacious. Nowhere in the warring or neutral world has increase in price resulted in increase of production as a unit. One can secure increase in a particular direction, but it will be at the expense of another direction. In England today the increase in production of wheat is secured directly at the expense of the production of other food stuffs. This is true in France, in Germany, and in all the neutral nations around Germany; high prices to the producer under war conditions do not and cannot lead to increased production. Now priority appeal does this in a particular direction, in the experience of the nations at war, more effectively than price.

The present cry is for wheat in this country. It is a priority responsibility. It is recognized that wheat need has a priority in this war; the farmer planted wheat not because he believed \$2.20 to be a better price for him than the possible price he hoped he might secure for other grains—he has planted it unquestionably as a direct response to the priority appeal. Here we have the same situation that they have found abroad both with the Allies and with the enemies. One secures a public response from the standpoint of producer for production in a certain direction more effectively by having it issued as a priority appeal, and having it understood that it is a priority essential to war, than by price elevation. In other words, in the final analysis, the public is essentially and deeply patriotic and understands what the word priority means.

Now, there is a way in which food stuff can be increased in war

time, though not as a unit by the increase of price. It is by the re-definition of the standard of life. What do I mean by that? I mean that we utilize only a small portion of our crops as they are raised, as they leave the land, for the finished product on the table. We never eat over 5 per cent of our corn or over 10 per cent of our oats, but we consume all of our rice and wheat. We have so specialized in food production that we consume but a small amount of our produce. If we were to take the ration of the American people in 1888 and apply it to the American people of today, with our present production, we would find ourselves blessed with a superabundance that we do not possess today, because the standard of what constituted subsistence then was nearer the soil—more elemental; it demanded less manufacture, less handling, and, of course, less waste. Now we can secure an increase of food stuffs by going back—by the simplification of life. Every pound of meat we consume is produced at the cost of ten or fifteen times the unit value of its caloric content. With the nations at war the diet becomes more simple, more vegetarian, more rough; and thus they find the differential between the total produce and the consumed fraction much smaller.

Four months ago we did not possess milling facilities in this country to carry more than half of the cereal requirements for cereals other than wheat. Today we mill corn and other non-wheat cereals in amounts not only sufficient to cover the non-wheat requirements of the American people but also to freely export them, indicating to what degree the feature of manufacture bears on utilization. We say that we had 1,300,000,000 bushels of oats last year, but we only manufactured 8,000,000 barrels of oatmeal; and as oats cannot be consumed by human beings in any other state, the real definition of our oat food is not the yield of oats at all—it is the milling capacity for oatmeal and that alone. Just as this is increased and as we increase industrially the output in these directions, and as diet of our people becomes more simplified and more primitive, we secure an increase in human food. But we do not secure it by increasing prices on all food stuffs, either artificially or naturally, by fixation or speculation, so long as we define food by the present standard of living.

And lastly, the point that impresses itself upon every man who has observed on both sides—and it has happened to be my privilege

to observe on both sides of the battle line—is the almost utter futility, or, at least, the very great difficulty, of getting a nation to save food, even one commodity of food, before it has attained the sacrificial consciousness of war. We cannot expect a nation to save food if it does not save automobiles, graphophones, hats, shoes and all commodities of life, especially luxuries. It is impossible. One cannot separate out of one's consciousness a particular commodity and give it a priority in saving. A fraction can do it—perhaps 30 per cent of the people can do it;—but a people as a whole cannot do it, and that is the reason why in this country we have, just as they had in England in 1916 and in Germany in 1915, difficulty in the program of food conservation because our people have not yet attained sacrificial consciousness for the carrying on of the war—in which we view every act of our lives and everything we do and everything we wear and everything we eat, and everything we desire, and everything we use, from the standpoint of a new rule, whether it will or will not aid in the carrying on of the war, whether it is or is not a positive military measure. That is the final step of analysis in all systems of food control. When we have reached that plane, as they have reached it in England and France, the whole problem of control becomes simplified, because the motivation is there that makes it possible to carry through a repression applied to foods in general or to any particular food.

ESSENTIALS TO A FOOD PROGRAM FOR NEXT YEAR

BY GIFFORD PINCHOT, LL.D., Milford, Pennsylvania

Food has been our greatest contribution to the war, and it is likely to continue so. Heroic France is today actually so short of food that she has been obliged to cut down her consumption of wheat 25 per cent, her consumption of sugar 49 per cent, and her consumption of fats 48 per cent, in spite of all we could do to help. That fact brings home the part the food we alone can supply has been playing and is to play in winning the war. Great Britain, also, is dependent still for 65 per cent of her essential foodstuffs on Canada and the United States.

Food is our greatest contribution to the war, and our greatest